

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: October 29, 1959

SUBJECT: Western Summit Meeting

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Livingston T. Merchant, G

Ambassador Hervé Alphand, French Embassy  
M. Claude Lebel, Minister, French Embassy  
Mr. Robert H. McBride, WE

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Ambassador Alphand opened the meeting by saying that General de Gaulle had received the President's last message and was glad that the President accepted the idea of a Western Summit meeting in Paris on December 19. He said that the same proposition had been made to the British and Germans but no reply had been received yet. Mr. Merchant said that we had indications from Lord Hood that the 19th was satisfactory to London but had no word from Bonn as yet. Ambassador Alphand said he assumed that all would accept this date and that an appropriate announcement could be worked out. He said that the French Government proposed that the necessary arrangements regarding the timing and text of the press release should be worked out by the Quai d'Orsay with the three Embassies in Paris. He assumed that there would, of course, eventually be simultaneous releases in all four capitals. Mr. Merchant said that he was sure this was satisfactory and that we were agreeable to Paris as a coordinating point. Ambassador Alphand asked if we would cable authority to our Chargé in Paris to this effect and Mr. Merchant replied to this query in the affirmative.

Mr. Merchant asked if the French Government had any specific proposals with regard to a date for an announcement. Ambassador Alphand replied in the negative and said Paris desired to announce the date for the Western Summit as soon as possible.

Ambassador Alphand then said he assumed that it was clear that there would be German participation in the Western Summit for matters relating to Berlin and Germany but if such questions as disarmament or assistance to underdeveloped countries were discussed Germany would not be a participant. Mr. Merchant noted that we were in a curious position because of Adenauer's view that the Summit

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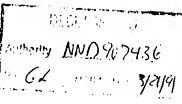
meeting with the Soviets eventually should concentrate on disarmament and not discuss Berlin or Germany whereas the French were now proposing that Germany should be excluded from disarmament discussions in the Western Summit. Ambassador Alphand referred to precedence and said that in the past we had always discussed the German problem with the Germans present and other problems with them absent. He referred to the President's press conference of this week and said that the President appeared to agree with the French position. Ambassador Alphand continued that what was probably envisaged was that there should be a day or at least part of a day when there would be tripartite meetings and that Adenauer would join them after the tripartite meetings, as had often occurred in the past. Mr. Merchant referred to the President's plan to leave Paris by Monday, December 21 at noon. Ambassador Alphand again said that in the past Adenauer had been present for questions relating to Germany but that other problems have been discussed on a tripartite basis.

Mr. Merchant then referred to the difficulties which the Western Summit meeting was engendering with regard to NATO and to the pressure for converting the NATO Ministerial Meeting in December to Heads of Government level. He said this would not be convenient to the President. Ambassador Alphand said that the December NATO meeting should be at the Foreign Ministers level as in the past in the view of the French. Mr. Merchant agreed but referred to the fact that the Italians had already proposed that it should be at the Heads of Government level.

Ambassador Alphand reverted again to the question of German participation in the Western Summit and asked if we agreed with the French position. Mr. Merchant said that we agreed in the past there had been German participation to discuss Berlin and the German questions. He thought that perhaps if Adenauer were present throughout this would create certain difficulties in NATO. However, practically it was not possible to confine discussions when the Germans were present to the German question and Adenauer would certainly give his views on disarmament. Ambassador Alphand said that an opening tripartite session was important and that Adenauer could obviously give his views on other subjects than Germany even if he joined the meeting later than at the beginning. Mr. Merchant said he would speak to the Secretary on this point but believed that we were in agreement. Ambassador Alphand then passed to a discussion of the Italian question and said that it would be easier to cope with this problem if we could say to the Italians that the Germans would only be present for discussions on Berlin and Germany. The Italian claim would be better if Germany were present throughout. Mr. Merchant noted the Italian position that they should be present at a Western Summit meeting if questions other than Berlin were discussed. Ambassador Alphand said we could point out to them that their views on disarmament could better be made known through the ten-power disarmament group.

Ambassador Alphand stated again the necessity for a tripartite meeting first and added that if this could not last for a whole day, it could be confined to part of a day. He inquired as to whether we had received approaches from the Italians already on the Western Summit meeting, to which Mr. Merchant replied in the affirmative. Ambassador Alphand noted that if we admitted the Italians to the Western Summit meeting there would be the problem of others such as the Canadians and the Dutch. Mr. Merchant agreed that we would run the risk of splitting NATO in such an eventuality.

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Passing to the question of preparations for the Western Summit Ambassador Alphand asked if it were our idea to have these take place here. Mr. Merchant replied in the affirmative and said that the Secretary would be calling the three Ambassadors not later than Monday to discuss the establishment of a working group here. Since the Western Summit meeting was taking place later than we had thought desirable it was important to get on with substantive preparations and the development of substantive positions in the interim. Ambassador Alphand indicated that probably two working groups would be needed, one tripartite and one quadripartite. Mr. Merchant said that he assumed this would follow from the form which the Western Summit talks appeared to be taking. Ambassador Alphand said that we should not discuss economic questions, for example, with the Germans present. He inquired what else we had in mind for the Western Summit beside disarmament and the German question. Mr. Merchant said he thought these were the two principal general topics which logically would be discussed in a Western Summit meeting but that the question of agenda should be discussed in the preparatory talks. He thought that at the Western Summit it would also be essential to discuss the basic philosophy of a Summit Meeting with the Soviets, for example whether we considered it a final confrontation on a wide variety of issues or rather the first of a series of contacts. He noted that our own thinking was more in terms of the latter alternative whereas the French apparently envisaged the former. Ambassador Alphand said that he thought the French and British views represented the two extremes in this context. He thought that the Western Summit would also wish to discuss the date for a meeting with the Soviets.

Mr. Merchant mentioned as another possible agenda item for a Western Summit of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. With regard to a query about discussions of economic policy at the Western Summit, Mr. Merchant thought that the President might want to raise informally at some point such subjects as economic matters, the question of defense burden sharing, NATO's posture in the world, and a variety of problems of the Western alliance. Ambassador Alphand asked if it would be planned to discuss problems of European economic integration. He also asked if there would be detailed discussions of NATO problems and the structure of NATO as had taken place between the President and de Gaulle in Paris. Mr. Merchant replied that our thought were not yet precise but that he did not envisage we would get into matters as detailed as NATO command structure, etc., but that there should be a more general exchange.

In conclusion Mr. Merchant said we would send instructions to Paris tonight to our Chargé with regard to the coordination of the announcement of the Western Summit. He said he assumed there would be a French draft text and in reply to a query from Ambassador Alphand said he assumed that this would also have to deal with the nature of German participation in the Western Summit. Finally, he said that our Chargé in Paris would be asked to refer back to the Department whatever text was submitted by the French Government for consideration.

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